CLAIM AMENDMENTS

Claim Amendment Summary

Claims pending

- Before this Amendment: Claims 1-18 and 20-22.
- After this Amendment: Claims 1-18 and 20-22.

Claims previously canceled: Claim 19.

Claims canceled herein: None.

Claims previously amended: Claims 1, 6, 10, 16, and 20.

Claims amended: Claims 1, 10, and 16.

New claims: None.

Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for communicating object data comprising:

generating a hash value based on object data, wherein the object data includes metadata descriptive of the object data, and wherein the metadata includes a type field indicating an object type which has been previously selected by a user of a local computer to uniquely represent the user during future sessions of instant messaging;

storing the object data at a storage location, wherein the object data at the storage location is represented by an object name having the hash value and a location identifier identifying the storage location; and

returning the object name having the hash value and the location identifier identifying the storage location to the user, the object name enabling the user to access the object data including the object type, such that the object type which has been selected by the user can be used to uniquely represent the user during the future sessions of instant messaging.

2. (Original) A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising:

receiving a request for the object data, the request including the object name; and

retrieving the object data from a local cache based on the hash value.

3. (Original) A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising:

receiving a request for the object data, the request including the object name; and

in response to receiving the request, retrieving the object data from the location using the location identifier.

4. (Original) A method as recited in claim 1 further comprising:

receiving a request for the object data, the request including the object name; and

determining whether the requested object data is in a local cache based on the hash value; and

if the requested object data is in the local cache, retrieving the object data from the local cache,

otherwise, retrieving the requested object data from the location identified by the location identifier.

5. (Original) A method as recited in claim 4 wherein the retrieving the requested object data from the location identified by the location identifier comprises:

retrieving the requested object data from network storage.

6. (Previously Presented) A method as recited in claim 4 wherein the retrieving the requested object data from the location identified by the location identifier comprises:

retrieving the requested object data from a local file system within the local computer.

7. (Original) A method as recited in claim 4 wherein the retrieving the requested object data from the location identified by the location identifier comprises:

retrieving the requested object data from a remote file system.

8. (Original) A method as recited in claim 7 wherein the retrieving the requested object data from a remote file system comprises:

accessing the remote file system via a peer-to-peer connection.

9. (Original) A method as recited in claim 7 wherein the retrieving the requested object data from a remote file system comprises:

accessing the remote file system via a connection through a switchboard server.

10. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium having stored thereon computer-executable instructions for performing a method comprising:

receiving a name associated with a user on a remote computer, the name including location data and a hash value uniquely associated with a data object, wherein the data object includes metadata descriptive of the data object, and wherein the metadata includes a type field indicating an object type which has been previously selected by the user to uniquely represent the user during future sessions of instant messaging; and

retrieving the data object from one of a local cache based on the hash value or a location identified by the location data, such that the object type which has been selected by the user can be used to uniquely represent the user during the future sessions of instant messaging.

11. (Original) A computer-readable medium as recited in claim 10 wherein the retrieving the data object from one of a local cache based on the hash value or a location identified by the location data comprises:

determining whether the data object is in a local cache based on the hash value; and

if the data object is in the local cache, retrieving the data object from the local cache;

otherwise, retrieving the data object from the location identified by the location data.

12. (Original) A computer-readable medium as recited in claim 11 wherein the retrieving the data object from the location identified by the location data comprises retrieving the data object from a remote file system.

13. (Original) A computer-readable medium as recited in claim 11 wherein the retrieving the data object from the location identified by the location data comprises retrieving the data object from a local file system.

14. (Original) A computer-readable medium as recited in claim 11 wherein the retrieving the data object from the location identified by the location data comprises retrieving the data object from a network storage.

15. (Original) A computer-readable medium as recited in claim 11 wherein the retrieving the data object from the location identified by the location data comprises accessing a remote computer via a peer-to-peer connection.

16. (Currently Amended) A system for managing objects representing users in an instant messaging conversation, the system comprising:

a data object, wherein the data object includes metadata descriptive of the data object, and wherein the metadata includes a type field indicating an object type which has been previously selected by a user of a local computer to uniquely represent the user during future sessions of instant messaging, the data object having an object name including a location identifier and a hash value; and

an object store operable to retrieve the data object from a location identified by the location identifier and store the data object in a local cache based on the hash value, such that the object type which has been selected by the user can be used to uniquely represent the user during the future sessions of instant messaging.

17. (Original) A system as recited in claim 16 wherein the object name further comprises a creator identifier identifying a creator of the data object.

18. (Original) A system as recited in claim 16 further comprising a transport protocol stack enabling the object store to retrieve the data object from a remote storage location over a peer-to-peer connection.

19. (Canceled)

20. (Previously Presented) A system as recited in claim 19 wherein the metadata further comprises:

a friendly name field; and

a hash value based on the metadata.

21. (Original) A system as recited in claim 16 wherein the location identifier comprises a uniform resource locator (URL).

22. (Original) A system as recited in claim 16 wherein the location identifier comprises a uniform resource identifier (URI).